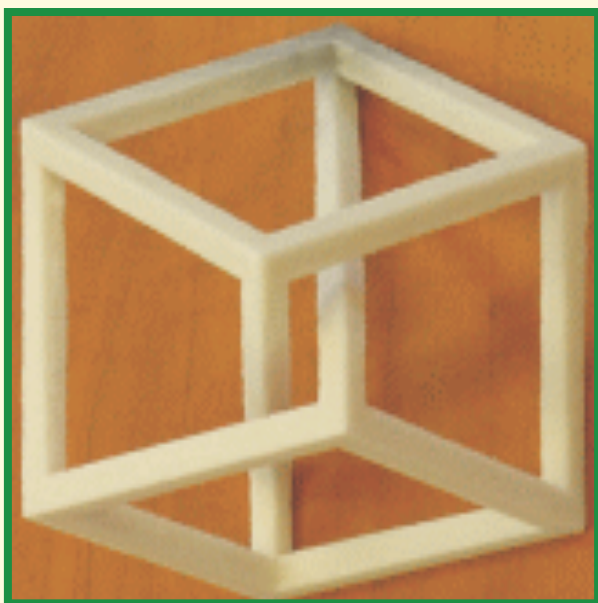


WHY?



لماذا

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*by*

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وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ  
وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا

wa °ānzala-llāhu °alayka-l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmata  
wa °allamaka mā lam takun ta°alam:  
wa kāna faḍlu-llāhi °alayka °aḍḥimā

Allāh has sent down the Book and Wisdom to you  
and taught you what you did not know before.  
The favor of Allāh upon you is indeed immense.  
(Sūratu-n-Nisā°i 4:113)



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## WHY?

That I once heard say...and it began this way...I was born by the river...so I say its been a long time comin...what was up there beyond the end...its been a long, a long time comin...could you help me, please?...I won't last for long...I tell you that its been a long, long time...all the way...and to cry all night long...for what I knew was wrong...its sure has been a long way comin ...Yes it has...Every step of the way...or you can say it is a long and dusty road...and you don't know where to...and you said "would you go?"...would you go?...or it was a foreign land... a voice said "will you walk?"...and you saw nothing...would you go?...it's been a long long way down...and it's been a long, long, time coming ...oh but I have found you...or say it was a long and winding path...the road is rocky and you don't know where...and you want water...there's been times that I thought...I won't last for long... but now I think I can carry on...it's been a long, long time coming...and I know a change is gonna come...Oh, yes it will...yes it will...a change is gonna come

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بَقِيَ مَرَحْنِي غَيْرُ مَا بَانَفْسِهِمْ

°inna-llāha lā yughayyiru mā bi-qawmin  
ḥatta yughayyirū mā bi-°anfusihi

truly Allāh does not change a people  
until they change what is in themselves

(Sūratu-r-Ra'd 13:11)

So this is really the "why" of ṭasawwuf. Why? Why becuae you can never really figure it out for your self. Like Sam Cooke sang,

"It's been too hard living and I'm afraid to die  
Cuz I don't know what's up there beyond the sky  
It's been a long, a long time coming but I know  
A change gona' come oh yes it will."



Somewhere in your life you reach the point where you know you really don't know and you know that really you can't know – at least if things keep on going the way they are – and if you don't know and you can't find out you will die without ever knowing what it's really all about.

And all your life will be for nothing. You will have been born, lived and died all for nothing because you don't really know why.

## Why?

And that ‘not knowing’ galvanizes a lot of people to find out why.

Those of you who have listened or read some of my earlier talks will recall that I have have said and written many times that, whereas in the past our pious ancestors (*salaf*/سلف) would travel sometimes a thousand miles or more for one ḥadīth or ḥukm that now, in our time, when the ḥadīth have all been collected and the ḥukūm are all available on google, that now we must walk hundreds of miles or fly thousands of miles to find one good person to teach us.

And not just any old “good” person but one of the people of authority (°*ūli-l-°amri*) referred to by Allāh ﷻ in this °āyāt:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِيَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ط

yāā °ayyuha-l-ladhīna °amanū °aṭī°u-llāha wa °aṭī°u -r-rasūla  
wa °ūli-l-°amri minkum

Oh you who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger,  
and those from among you who are invested with authority!

(Sūrah an-Nisā° 4:59)

When this °āyāt was revealed, Jabir Ibn Abdullah Anṣari ؓ asked the Prophet ﷺ who these °*ūli-l-°amri* were.

He ؓ replied that the °*ūli-l-°amri* were his successors (*kḥilafah*/خليفة) and his inheritors (*warith*/وريث).

Now these words have a lot of baggage that comes with them both from the Sunnī and the Shī'a perspectives but from the Sūfī perspective they are not at all ambiguous.

Consdier this ḥadīth:

°Ali ؓ reported: “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘I am the city of knowledge and °Ali is its gate.’ [at-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim] In another narration on the authority of °Ali ؓ, the Prophet ﷺ said: “I am the house of wisdom and °Alī ؓ is its door.” [at-Tirmidhī] Also al-Bazzar, and at-Tabaranī in his *al-°Awsat*, on the authority of Jābir bin °Abdullāh, al-Ḥākim and al-°Uqayli in his *al-Du°afa*, and Ibn °Adi on the authority of Ibn °Umar said that °Alī ؓ reported: “The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘I am the city of knowledge and °Alī ؓ is its gate.’”

انا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها

“I am the city of knowledge, and °Alī is its door.

Why?

Yet another ḥadīth on the same subject reads:

انا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها. لا أحد يدخل البيت إلا من خلال البوابة

°anna madinatu-l-°im wa °ali bābuhā:

lā °aḥadā yudkḥila-l-bayt °illā min kḥilālu-l-bawābah

I am the city of knowledge and °Alī is its gate.

One does not enter the house except through its gate

And in the light of those °aḥadīth consider the following °āyat.

وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

wa°tu-l-buyūta min °abāwābiha wa °ttaqu-llāha la°allakum tufliḥūn

So enter houses by their doors

and be aware of Allāh, so that hopefully you will be successful.

(Suratu-l-Baqarah 2:189)

So, if like Sam Cooke, you, like most of us were born on the river (of time if nothing else) and, like the river, you been always running and you went to your brother asking him to “help me please,” and he wound up knocking you back down on your knees,” then the time has come no matter how long a time it’s been coming to find the man who has his hand in the hand of the man who has his hand in the hand of the man who has his hand in the hand of the Prophet ﷺ.

And that’s what ṭaṣawwuf is about at it’s most basic level.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۚ

°inna-l-ladḥīna yubāyi°unaka °innamā yubāyi°ūna-llāh

yadu-llāhi fowka °aydihim

Truly those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance to Allāh;  
the Hand of Allāh is above their hands.

(Sūratu-l-Fath 48:10)



Books, lectures, CD’s, DVD’s, Internet, WorldWideWeb, Google, Twitter and tweet me this or tweet me that and friend or friend me not and what the kḥatīb did or didn’t say will not make any real difference if you are lost and looking to be found.

And the bottom line truth is that the only hand that belongs to the man who is truly invested with authority and is one of the doors that open out into the house of knowledge can be of any real help to you.

## Why?

Look to the situation of the people of our realm, by which I mean the realm of those living in the so-called developed nation states and not those living under the gun and occupation, or those whose lands are flooded and don't even have a dry set of clothes to put on or those who are living under famine or near famine conditions and don't know where the meal is coming from and who have lost their babies after walking for days without food save roots and grubs.

Here I'm talking about the wage slaves of the developed world.

As an aside, it's interesting to note that slavery was not really abolished out of the goodness of heart on the part of the slave masters and the economic interests behind them, but it was abolished because the captains of industry and free trade and unbridled mercantile capitalism found that it was cheaper not to keep slaves but rather to allow people to enslave themselves.

The really rich never give anything away really.

The slave owner has to house the slave, clothe the slave, feed the slave, provide a modicum of medical help at least to keep the slave working etc. whereas when you simply hire people you have none of those responsibilities and if they get sick you can just throw them away like toilet paper and if they live in slums and wear ragged clothes and are underfed well – hey – that's their lookout.

Consider the wage slave starting out from K to 12 out of the house early in the morning, toiling at their desks to get, not an *education*, but vocational training followed by another 4 to 6 to 8 years of more vocational training (and please do not even mention the word education as the last thing that the captains of capital want is educated workers) and then it is off to the office, the plant or the assembly line or the mine for another 20 or 30 years if you're lucky and then a few brief years usually culminating in heart, liver or lung diseases then dying in a hospital or a hospice and goodbye to all that. In brief that is the life of the wage slave in the developed world.

Oh yes of course there are a few things that are thrown in but what are they? Cars, TV's, a splitlevel or a mini-mansion, a few brief vacations in the sun or snow, maybe a dog or two or a cat, some kids, a friend or friends, some super bowl games or world cups, a semi-memorable movie or play or a symphony here or there and then, inevitably death, which is usually mechanical and drugged.

Why?

Perhaps you can add a few more fillips, simulations or stimulations but, in the end, not much more than that when all is said and done.

And even for the alphabet soup pot luck Muslims and the majority of the cultural Muslims as well, that is basically how it goes for them too. Maybe they get to Makkah and Madinah but lately going to on hajj is like visiting a mall and there only are a few moments of *sakinah* here and there; but ask the average Muslim when was the last time they really prayed wholeheartedly or when they got more out of fasting than hungry and you won't get many positive answers. Oh yes they stand faithfully in rows, but what is in their minds and hearts? How often do they stand in the presence of Allāh with heads and hearts free from their checkbooks and cell phones, car payments and mortgages and who's going to pick up the kids?

All this talk lately about the 99%, well, that's what it is and for the other 1% controlling most of wealth it's basically the same, just a bit more opulent with a little better health care, some plastic surgery and some implants perhaps; longer vacations, bonuses and real mansions instead of mini-mansions and fancy restaurants instead of Macdonalds, but the same nasty death under beeping machines and the drug filled drips of intensive care and then – goodnight all.

Everybody knows that's how it goes – the ship is leaking, the captain's lying and the dice are loaded – everybody knows – that's how it goes.

But among both the voluntary and involuntarily enslaved there are always a few who are not satisfied with such a mockery of life.

There are those who have seen a leaf in autumn or a flower in spring, who have, on the rare vacation, woken up to a bright new morning, seen the jungle wet with rain after flying the ocean in a silver plane to watch the sun rise on a desert isle.

Or if they are “more” Muslim, visited Makkah or Madinah or al-Quds and seen some of the treasures of the Sacred Trust.

But somehow some of them know or intuit that there is something somehow more than nine to five and here a perk and there a perk.

It for these people that *ṭaṣawwuf* exists.

And its for these few that I write and speak. To urge them on and see them safely gathered in because – yes – there really is much more to life than the desert of the hell I have been describing.

## Why?

Shaykh Muḥammad al-Jamal in his book “*Music of the Soul*” writes quoting, in part, Sayidinā ʿAlī ؑ, saying, “He sent some of His fragrance, His water, for that reason, so that you could be from Him and return to Him. You are not just a part because there is no part. There are no numbers. As my beloved ʿAlī ؑ said, ‘Do not think you are a small star, when you contain the whole universe inside you.’ You contain everything inside this holy essence of the fragrance from this water. But where is the water? He put this water inside the glass which carries the real color of what the water carries, so you cannot say there is separation between the glass and the water. For this reason, Allāh ﷻ wants you to be very careful with this glass because if you break this glass, you lose the essence of this deep secret water. Without this water you cannot understand, and you cannot live for a moment, because there would be no meaning to your life.”

So how to come by meaning for one’s life is one of the ‘whys’ of ṭaṣawwuf. but you can only get it from one who has it.



First off you must absolutely come to know that the dunya, in the end and in then beginning, is never really going to give you anything that is really really. That the dunya is about either stimulation or simulation and that the stimulation never lasts and the simulation is just that – a worn out metaphor.

You must know that, if you are a teacher, accountant, lawyer or a doctor pulling down your six figures; you must know that if you are a desk jockey, a pencil sharpener, a go-fer, a gal friday or simply a dispensible (like the woman we heard of recently who had been working the same job for the same company for 29 years and nine months and came into find her desk cleaned out, her ‘stuff’ in a box on what had been “her” chair and a pink slip on her desk).

You must know that, no matter if you are Bill Gates or Mu’mar Ghadafy, Ghayr Mubaarak. Sarkozy, Merkel, or Mevdev, Bush or Obama or – maybe – Osama and even Steve Jobs had his day as will Kim Il Sung, the Queen of England and the Duke of Earl.

You must know that, if you are occupying Wall Street, fighting in the streets of Benghazi, protesting in Sanaʿ or living under the gun and occupation in Gaza or Kashmir or starving in Somalia or just plain homeless in Witchita, Urumuchi or Mumbai.



## Why?

No matter where you are or who you are or even think you are until you know you are nowhere and nothing there is no hope.

Knowing that one is truly nothing and that where you may have gotten or think you have gotten is in reality nowhere is the real beginning of being found.

Let me tell you a little of my own story on this account.

Some forty years or so ago I was living basically on charity on a ranch in Arizona where I had the job of exercising a horse everyday. I had, in the eyes of some people, accomplished a lot and what I had “done” was good because it actively helped other people. I wasn’t involved in any kind of graft or corruption or stealing or cheating or scamming or underhanded dealings. I lived a clean life, was a strict vegetarian, didn’t drink or use drugs. I meditated daily, read uplifting books and in general tried to be a good guy but...

But?

But at a relatively young age I realised that in spite of all of this (and more) I was not really getting anywhere and wasn’t even sure there was somewhere to get.

When a benefactor offered me a “job” of exercising his horses (because he was too busy running here and there taking care of his radio and television empire) on a ranch on the dried up river bed of the Hasayampa in Arizona I jumped at it.

Days were leisurely, the ranch was pretty much in the middle of nowhere and I didn’t have a car in any case, the “boss” was seldom there, the Mexican caretaker and his wife didn’t speak any English and there was nothing to do but nothing and taking the horses out for a three or four hour ride up the dry river bed (good for their hooves) and back again with a good hard full gallop coming and going. Otherwise it was canter, trot or just amble along. Rambling with Gambling I called it after a radio announcer from my youth.

It was perfect purposeless existence. Sacred boredom; a kind of benign nothingness in which I was free to spend hours looking at the various multicolored lichen that grew on the rocks than lined the old river bed or compare saguaros, especially the one’s that had bird nests, mainly owls, and other dearth flora and fauna. The sky was blue every day. The sun came up and the sun went down and the stars came out at night and were so bright I could see to hike by them.

## Why?

I did nothing but exercise the horse and after a while ceased even to read. For a while I kept on meditating but after a while it was all meditation so why meditate. It felt strange – time out of time out.

Then one day I took off on my favorite horse, her name was Babe, and went way up river where there was a still flowing spring.

Phoenix, some sixty miles away, had sucked all the water out of the river but here and there there were a few ‘seeps’, and way up the old river bed was still a flowing spring and a small pool which attracted the most beautiful dragonflies.

It was a long ride and even though it was winter in Arizona it was hot and when I reached the spring I hobbled the horse so she would not go too far, had a drink and stuck my head under the water of the pool to cool off and lay down on the sedge and sand and fell asleep.

In my sleep I woke up (though I was asleep in reality) and there was a man sitting beside the pool who began to talk to me. At first I thought he was some kind of forest ranger or fire lookout or something like that because he had on a green shirt and green pants and a green hat. But I didn’t notice any badges or flashes or name tags and I remember kind of wondering about that but we began to talk and I soon forgot all about that.

He told me I was lost and going nowhere and told me it was time to change my life. He suggested I get back on the horse, take it back to the stable, call the owner and tell him I had to go to California for a week or so and that Emanuel (the caretaker) could take care of Babe for a week without much trouble – as I said it really was a kind of and R&R charity job and told me to call this person in California I vaguely knew and ask if I could stay with him for a few days or so and that there I would meet this man and I should go along with him and do what he said for now, but that things would change and when they changed I should change with them.

He said a few more things and then, saying good bye, got up and started walking away up the river bed until he disappeared behind some salt cedars.

I woke up very puzzled not knowing if I had been dreaming or had been awake because the whole exchange was so real and I don’t mean surreal or even so real.

In any case I did what he said and a month later I was in India.

Why?

And things did change though for a while they were the same or the same but different but still the same even though they were different. Before that trip up the Hasayampa I had not really traveled much by which I mean I had not really travelled outside of the United States – a couple of trips to Mexico was about all.

Suddenly for about three or four years I was travelling all over the world or at least to Asia and Europe a lot and what I had been doing and what I had thought was important wasn't so important anymore. I kept remembering the line of Charles deGaulle. "Graveyards are filled with indispensable people."

And during that time I became someone else and had a whole different set of marching orders and wound up having different titles and job descriptions and even a different wife.

But I always kept remembering the guy dressed in green by the spring on the Hasayampa and I kept going along with the man he had said I should call and kept remembering that he told me that things would change and change again and so they did.

Finally one late summer day I wound up having a talk with the man and emptying my mind and heart saying that though I had gone this far I didn't see how to go any further because I couldn't figure out what it was he was really saying – or maybe better – what he was really doing though I more or less understood what he was saying.

He told me not to worry and told me he was only doing what his father had told him to do and his father was his father not mine and said now it was time to move on and laid out two choices for me.

He gave me the name of a man in Europe who I knew from reading his books and told me I could go see him and he would help me to understand better, or he said I could leave Europe and go to Jerusalem (which had just been captured in the War of '67) and that, possibly (and he stressed possibly), I would find someone there who might be able to help to understand what was happening.

I chose al-Quds ash-Sharīf or Jerusalem as it is known in English.

To make a long story short I met a lot of very "interesting" people in al-Quds including Shaykh Muḥammad with whom I have been friends for more than forty years now. I also met my shaykh in the ancient city of al-Khalīl. He too was ancient, being over a hundred years old. He told me to forget Ṣūfism "for now" and study ʿIslām.

## Why?

[For those wishing more detail; names, dates etc. you can find some these in *Exile* the first volume of my mémoires available on line at GreenMountainSchool.Org in the Publications section].

That advise of Shaykh °Abdu-r-Raḥman ash-Sharīf resulted in my going to Makkah for Ḥajj and then staying on to study for some years at the Markaz al-Lawghatu-l-°Arabiyyah (مركز اللغة العربية) of the Kuliyyat ash-Sharī'ah and then, because another man told me so, I left Makkah for al-Qāhirah and the land of Miṣr where I was to live and dwell off and on for many years and, after the death of my first shaykh (Allāh have Mercy on him) to finally wind up studying with the man who was to be my shaykh for life and then teaching in Alexandria under his directions until Shaykh Muḥammad saw the Prophet ﷺ while doing a *kḥalwah* underneath the Rock above which the Golden Dome is built and he ﷺ told him that I should return to America.

And in the years that have followed Shaykh °Ibrāhīm too has since left this world, may Allāh have mercy on him as well, so now I am alone again teaching, by his orders and with his permission, and living in America but ready to move when the order comes.

All of this as a result of a horseback ride, drinking from a spring and falling asleep and dreaming that a man told me to go to California.

Now if you were to ask, “Why?” what could I say really?



What I will say is that “Why?” is one of the easiest questions to answer when it comes to the subject of ṭaṣawwuf if you “get it”.

And if you don’t “get it”, it may take a while to understand, but if you persist in your lostness °*inshāā’allāh* you may get it.

If you think you know it all you probably will never “get it”.

You have to be lost before you can be found is the answer.

Now with that, hopefully, understood I would like to speak and write about more of the whys that are connected to ṭaṣawwuf.

To begin with, you can never really understand unless you understand °Islam, if nothing else, at least the need for ṭaṣawwuf which I already have gone over at great length at the beginning of this essay.

I would also add another thing, which is if you aren’t a Muslim you should become one, because if you don’t you will never get it at all.

Why?

°Islām is a gift from Allāh ﷻ for every man and woman, young and old, black, white, brown, red, yellow and every shade in between. With °Islām all things are possible, and without it the law of diminishing returns applies at every level, and I neither write nor say this with any polemic in mind or heart but simply because that is how Allāh ﷻ has made things to be.

Does that mean there are not other truths that have existed or exist? Of course not. Allāh says He has sent a Messenger to every nation

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ

°innā °arsalnāka bi-l-ḥaqqi bashīran wa nadhīran  
wa °in min °ummatin °illā khālā fihā nadhīr

Surely We have sent you with the truth  
as a bearer of good news and as a warner;  
and there is not a nation but a warner has passed in it.

(Sūratu-l-Fatir 35:24)

°Imām Suyuti in his *al-Hawī li-l-Fatawī* stated that al-Ḥākim al-Nayṣabur reported that Abu Ḍharr asked the Prophet ﷺ how many Prophets and Messengers Allāh ﷻ had sent and his ﷺ response was “124,000 Prophets and 313 Messengers”.

If, for instance, one goes back to circa 1100 BCE in India we find *Sanatan Dharma*, a Sanskrit phrase meaning “the eternal law that sustains, upholds and surely preserves”.

“*Sanatana*” is a Sanskrit word that denotes that which is *Anadi* (beginningless), *Anantha* (endless) and does not cease to be, that which is eternal and everlasting; and what else is this but a pure description of Allāh ﷻ in essence. *Dharma* derives from *dhri*, meaning to hold together, to sustain. Its approximate meaning is “Natural Law”, or what we call in Arabic *fiṭrah* (فطرة) or those principles of reality which are inherent in the very nature and design of the universe. Thus the term *Sanatana Dharma* can be roughly translated to mean “the natural, ancient and eternal way” which has at its heart the phrase, *sūb ek*, meaning *it is one*, which in essence is no different than what we find in Qur°ān in Sūratu-l-°Ikhlāṣ 112:1-2.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ • اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

qul huwa-llāhu °aḥad • allāhu-ṣ-ṣamad

Say, He, Allāh is One •

Allāh the Eternal, Uncaused Cause of All Being.

Why?

By saying and writing this I don't mean to endorse the program of *Sophia Perennis* (Greek/Latin for 'eternal wisdom') espoused by the Traditionalist School within °Islāmic Šūfism. That is not at all what I am talking, about as I sought to clarify in my lectures on the nature of time and spirituality which I gave this summer at the Šadḥdhūlī School in California.

الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ  
وَأُخْتِمْ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

al-yawma °akmaltu lakum dīnakum

wa °atmamtu °alaykum ni°matī waraḍītu lakumu-l-°islāma dīnā

This day have I perfected your religion for you  
and completed My favour unto you,  
and have chosen for you Islam as your dīn<sup>1</sup>

(Sūratu-l-Ma°idah 5:3)

The above part of °āyāt three from Sūratu-l-Ma°idah was the final revelation received by the Prophet ﷺ according to some sources at the time of the Farewell Ḥajj on The Day of Standing on the Mountain of Mercy (Jabalu-l-°Arafat) and, according to other sources, on the eighteenth of Dhū-l-Ḥijjah at the time of al-Ḡhādir Khumm. Some of Sunni references which mentioned the revelation of the above verse of Qur°ān in Ḡhādir Khumm after the speech of the Prophet ﷺ include:

- (1) al-Durr al-Manthūr, by al-Hafiz Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, v3, p19
- (2) Tarikh, by Khatib al-Baghdadi, v8, pp 290,596 of Abu Hurayra
- (3) Manāqib, by Ibn Maghazālī, p19
- (4) History of Damascus, Ibn Asakir, v2, p75
- (5) al-°Itqān, by as-Suyuti, v1, p13
- (6) Manāqib, by Khawarazmi al-Hanfi, p80
- (7) al-Bidayah wa-n-Nihayah, by °Ibn Kathīr, v3, p213
- (8) Yanabī' al-Mawaddah, by al-Qudūzi al-Hanafī, p115
- (9) Nuzulu-l-Qur°ān, Hafiz Abu Nu'aym by authority of Abu Sa'id Khudri

1. *dīn* is generally translated as "religion" but it has many more meanings generally centered around the metaaphor of a "way of life". It is derived from the root *d°an°a* which means, roughly, to owe a debt or simply the word, debt, itself and carries the understanding that the price life is without cost or, as Americans say, "there are no free lunches". As such the understanding is that the *dīn* is our way of paying back or paying a debt to Allāh ﷻ for the gift of our life.

## Why?

Though there are many important dimensions to the tafsir of this ʾāyāt especially in relation to other events that took place at Ghadir Khumm, the one we are concerned with relates to time.

When Allāh ﷻ says (meaning), “This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon You, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.” (5:3 implicit in this saying is the understanding that religion or the dīn as such in the broadest sense was not fully perfected and complete until that very moment in time. So that while in the past there were other Revelations as well as other Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon them all and we do not discriminate between them, but Allāh ﷻ had not reached the point in time where He ﷻ actually completed or perfected religion as such and furthermore, at that point, having now “perfected” religion and “completed” His favor ﷻ on humanity” there was to be nothing more that that because you cannot perfect perfection or complete completion – what is perfect is by definition perfect and what is complete is complete and that it what is was and is from then to now and into whatever future comes to be.

By comparison when you look at the viewpoint of the Traditionalists it is akin to a person in the present time when it has absolutely been demonstrated that the world is indeed round and moving in space holding the views of those in earlier times conceived the world was both flat and stationary.

To understand the relation of time to religion is a very major understanding because it allows us to understand the gradual development over time from a simple to a more complex or more complete form of religion as revealed by Allāh ﷻ .

So while it is possible for people to be Taoists or Buddhists or Jains or Hindus or Zoroastrians or Jews or Christians or Animists there is no point in being one if you know that whatever form your practice is it has been superseded and completed in another form.

Does that mean as Muslims we should feel superior or that we are intolerant of people of other religions? Not at all. On the contrary, in accord with the teachings of Allāh ﷻ who sent Muhammad ﷺ as a mercy for all the world (21:107), our attitude and our actions must reflect that mercy and compassion if we are to consider ourselves to truthfully be faithful followers of Muhammad ﷺ. But consequentially at the same time we must understand that there really is no way to complete salvation outside of ʾIslām.

Why?

Back to “why?”

Given that understanding you might ask why things are the way they are, by which I mean that, for instance, from one end of the Muslim world to the other, the Muslims are ruled by cruel tyrannical corrupt and despotic ‘leaders’ who have, for the most part, also managed to suborn the majority of religious scholars (*‘ulemā’*/علماء) and even an overwhelming percentage of the more well known jurisprudents (*fuqahā’*/فقهاء). The less well known ones are in hiding.



Bashar al-Assad and the Chief Mufti of Syria



Mubarak and the Shaykh of al-Azhar



## Why?

The answer to that question of “why?” is fairly simple though the ramifications are complex.

Basically there are two answers.

One is that a great majority of the Muslims are involved in what you might call one dimensional Islam, and that is true if they are cultural Muslims, meaning those who act just the way their fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers and village or tribal elders acted or they are alphabet soup Muslims meaning those who belong to such organisations as ISNA, or ICNA, or IIIT, or NAIT or CAIR etc., beardless wonders, chinstrappers or the three day stubble beard types, Muslim brothers (and their counterpart sisters) in their western business suits and living a kind of part time ʿIslām that allows them to ‘enjoy’ the best of both worlds and make sure their kids are doctors or engineers or at the least PhD’s from reputable universities which as Pir Noor Muhammad rightly observed should really be called spiritual *abattoirs* or, in the worst case scenario, the archaic revivalists also known as neo-kharajites, salafis, wahabbis for whom all is *bidaʿah* and have this odd belief that they can travel back in time to a past that no longer exists and make everybody miserable in the process. The ones who don’t shrink from throwing acid in the faces of girls who want to go to school or blowing up masjids during Jumuʿah ṣalat or bribing young Muslim kids to be suicide bombers by promising them to take care of their parents.

The other answer is that both the above, and a number of other Muslims, simply don’t know better and don’t bother to find out, remaining on the ground floor of ʿIslam and never bothering to see beyond that by preferring a kind of horizontal religious materialism.

I want to direct readers to *The Handbook on Islam, Iman, Ihsan* by Shaykh Uthman dan Fodio and published by Diwan Press.

This book describes in detail the three-dimensional ʿIslām that emerged from Madinah and was the light for the whole of the west, from the lands of the Sudan (بلاد الأسود), including Nigeria, right up to Andalus, modern-day Spain. It is about an ʿIslām that holds law, spirituality and a clear intellectual tradition in balance.

This book is a manual, a handbook on the parameters of what needs to be known about Allāh ﷻ and His Messengers and on the Ṣūfī path of purification of the heart and self from the qualities that obscure their luminous reality and which veil them from Allāh ﷻ.

Why?

I would also recommend reading the essay on three dimensional ʿIslām in the book *The Vision of Islam* by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick published by Paragon House, February, 1995.

Both books are based on the so-called ‘*Jibril* ﷺ *Hadīth*’ related by ʿUmar ibn al-Khattab ؓ recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim which reads:

“One day when we were with the Prophet ﷺ, there appeared before us a man whose clothes were exceedingly white and his hair was exceedingly black, and there were no signs of travel on him.

“No one among us recognized him. He came and sat down by the Prophet ﷺ, and rested his knees against his and placed the palms on his hands on his thighs.

“He said: “O Muhammad, tell me about Islam.”

“The Prophet ﷺ, said: “Islam is to testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allāh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh, to establish regular prayer, to pay zakāh, to fast Ramaḍān and to go on pilgrimage (ḥajj) to the House if you are able to.”

He said: “You have spoken the truth.”

And we were amazed at his asking that and saying that he had spoken the truth.

Then he said: “Tell me about ʿimān (faith, belief).”

He said: “It means believing in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day, and believing in al-qadar (the divine will and decree), both good and bad.”

He said: “You have spoken the truth.” He said: “Tell me about ʿiḥsān.”

He said: “It means worshipping Allāh as if you can see Him, and although you cannot see Him, He can see you.”

He said: “Tell me about the Hour.”

He said: “The one who is being asked does not know more about it than the one who is asking.”

He said: “Then tell me about its signs.”

He said: “The slave-girl will give birth to her mistress, and you will see the barefoot, naked, destitute herdsmen competing in constructing lofty buildings.”

Then he departed and I stayed for a while. Then he said to me: “O ʿUmar, do you know who the questioner was?”

I said: “Allāh and His Messenger know best.”

He said: “That was Jibrīl, who came to teach you your religion.”

Why?

We mention all of this because we can see that for the most part contemporary Muslims confine themselves either to level one or level one plus 1 (sort of). We say sort of because if you will recall the ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ, “*lā yumin bi-llāh hatta yuḥib li-akḥihi mā yuḥib li nafsī*”, meaning “no one is a believer in Allāh until he loves for his brother (meaning fellow human being as ‘brother’ in this case is not gender specific) many Muslims who accept level one and profess level two do not in actuality “love for their fellow human being what they love for themselves” for how else could you explain that one child dies every six minutes to famine in Somalia and Somalia is only 1500 air miles from Riyadh in the “Kingdom” of Sa‘udi Arabia, where the average middle class income is 8,000 US\$ per month = 96,000 US\$ per year, and the overwhelming majority of citizens in Riyadh are Muslim, and if they loved for their fellow human beings what they loved for themselves how could it be possible such a discrepancy would exist allowing the death of a fellow Muslim child every 6 minutes?

So for this (and other compelling reasons) we say that the average Muslim never goes very far in the world of three dimensional ‘Islam, which does not mean they don’t pray and fast etc and don’t believe in Allāh and His Books and Messengers etc but that it seldom goes more than skin deep and this is one of the causes of the situation in the Muslim world being in the way we can see.

Indeed Muslim economists have calculated if every Muslim (including so-called “muslim” countries”) paid the prescribed 2.5% zakāt due on all Muslims that everyone, not just Muslims, would have enough to eat, clothes on their back and a roof over their head.

Instead what we have are people like Prince Alwaleed bin Talal of the “kingdom” of Sa‘udi Arabia with massive holdings in companies like Apple, Pepsico, Proctor & Gamble, News Corporation – as well as trophy assets like the Hotel George V in Paris and a private Airbus A380, the first ever sold to a private owner, which is the most expensive private plane ever put together at a cost of about \$488 Million Dollars, jet setting around the world while at the same time in the nearby country of Somalia children keep dying every six minutes and Muslim people in Sind, flooded out for the second time in two years have neither food to eat or a roof above their heads, and –yes – most likely the Prince does his daily five but so what.

## Why?

But it would be a long stretch, without being too judgmental, as judgement belongs to Allāh ﷻ alone, to say that it would appear he loves for his fellow beings what he loves for himself – Allāhu ʿalim.

Saʿudi Arabia accounts for 163 Billion in annual oil revenues whilst Iran accounts for 110 billion in oil revenues and the Gulf States, which account for 64 Percent of world's proved oil reserves, can only be guessed or guesstimated because precise figures are very hard to come by but since they have almost twice the amount of proven oil reserves as Saʿudi Arabia 200 billion wouldn't seem unrealistic.

That roughly 373 billion dollars, not counting other “Muslim” states such as Libya, Nigeria and Indonesia so we could say maybe five hundred billion dollars coming in every year.

If zakāt was paid on that amount that alone would amount to twelve billion five hundred million, which would feed more than a few Somalis and put food in the bellies, clothes on their backs and roofs above their heads for quite a few poor deserving Muslims.

Mawlana Hisham Kabbani رحمه الله said of this ḥadīth about belief and love, “Write this Holy hadees with golden letters, and look at it constantly! To elaborate on this hadees completely will take us till Judgement Day, as this hadees contains so much priceless advice.”

“This hadees is a vast ocean of knowledge, for it contains teachings that bring happiness, pleasure, relief and bonding within the Muslim community. One who practises it will be saved from the Fire of Hell, he will be raised from the lowest levels (*asfala safileen*) to the highest levels of faith. It will carry Muslims from the worst behaviour, to become from amongst the best people.

“This hadees means, one who ignores his neighbours, cannot acquire true faith. The minimum number of neighbours we must take care of, and be concerned about, is forty. Ask, how they are doing? Are they facing problems? Financial constraints? Illness? Difficulties? Have they been overcome with suffering? We must take note, we must be concerned!

“Ideally, every forty homes of believers must contribute money to form a fund or local collection – called Baitul Mal – which is built on contributions and is aimed at helping the less fortunate within that Community of forty homes.

Why?

“When believers come together to join hands, and to assist one another, especially in financial matters (eg providing food for old or bedridden ones, helping widows and orphans, assisting poor members of the community etc), the mercy of Allāh ﷻ descends and envelops the entire Community who have joined hands to support one another and to care for each others’ needs. That is true humanity. So every forty homes of believers should gather and do this. Allāh ﷻ sends them heavenly mercy, which a Spiritual refreshment for their Souls. A Community that is not enveloped by the mercy of Allāh ﷻ, will have enmity and hatred amongst themselves, and they will hurt and kill one another, as we are witnessing daily today.

“When believers form small Communities of forty households like this, they should also set aside a small area where they can pray in congregation, a place where the Azan is called out at each prayer time, five time daily. If Muslims across the world form into such small close-knit Communities, helping one another, and calling out the Azan amongst themselves, then the call to prayer will reverberate across the face of this earth, from North to South, and from East to West.

But we see that this doesn’t happen hardly anywhere.

So when you ask, “WHY?” that’s one of the reasons why and that is a material answer while there are far deeper spiritual answers to the question of “WHY?” which I hope to touch on in the rest of this essay, *‘inshāā ‘āllāh*.

Allāh ﷻ says,



لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ • ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

laqadā kḥalaqāna-l-‘insāna fī ‘aḥsani taqāwīm •  
ṭhumma radadnāhu ‘asfala sāfilīn

We created the human in the best of forms  
Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low.

(Sūratu-ṭ-Ṭīn 94:4-5)

What is so crucial in the above ‘āyāt is the phrase:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

laqadā kḥalaqāna-l-‘insāna fī ‘aḥsani taqāwīm  
*We created the human in the best of forms*

Why?

Here Allāh ﷻ is swearing a deep oath on Himself ﷻ that all of us human beings were created in the best of forms. When Allāh ﷻ swears in this way you accept whole heartedly and draw into your heart the Truth of what He ﷻ says.

Allāh ﷻ is telling us that we were created without flaw, with a pure soul imbued with *fiṭrah*, a powerful mind, and a body whose subtleties are still not understood by modern science. Allāh ﷻ is telling us that we are perfectly capable of fulfilling every obligation; of bearing any burden; and of achieving every noble dream.

But that affirming oath is immediately followed by:

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

ṭhumma radadnāhu ʾasfala sāfilīn

Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low.

(Sūratu-ṭ-Ṭīn 94:4-5)

And herein exactly in the “Why?” of ṭaşawwuf and the necessity for sufism, because after having been created in the best of forms, the highest *fiṭrah*, suddenly there is a fall to the lowest of the low.

And there rises the problem, the conundrum of how to return, as it were, to that best of forms in which Allāh ﷻ has created us, and that “how” is the whole reason behind ṭaşawwuf or şufism.

How can we regain our original being?

or

How do we return to what we were before we were.

So we can say that the beginning of the return is first to realise that we are lost and in great danger.

When we wrote earlier about the wage slaves starting out from K to 12 out of the house early in the morning, toiling at their desks to get, not an *education*, but vocational training, followed by another 4 to 6 to 8 years of more vocational training (and please do not even mention the word education as the last thing that the captains of capital want is educated workers), and then it is off to the office, the factory, the plant or the assembly line or the mine or the rig for another 20 or 30 years if you’re lucky and then a few brief years usually culminating in heart, liver, lung diseases or cancer, then dying in a hospital or a hospice and goodbye to all that. This way of life is the formula for forgetfulness, or *ghaflah* (غفلة) in Arabic.

## Why?

The same thing can be said for people who pray without praying, who fast without fasting – who simply are performing the acts that Allāh ﷻ has ordered without understanding really why they are doing what they are doing but are just doing because they know somehow they have to.

This is how people are reduced to the lowest of the low and forget why they are here and what they are really doing.

Are we against work or education. No! In no way nor are we in any way against prayer and fasting. We are among the most ardent supporters of work and education, prayer and fasting but work and education, prayer and fasting that is based on *taqwa* (التقوى) or the awareness or consciousness of Allāh ﷻ.

Don't you see that the people have forgotten all about death (except the death of others), the punishment in the grave, being accountable for our actions and basically why we were created? We have forgotten and become heedless of Allāh ﷻ in our hearts. Taqwah or the awareness of Allāh ﷻ is so powerful that if one acquires it one will never be involved in crime or meaningless actions.

What is this Taqwah? This is a question once asked by °Abdullah ibn °Umar ؓ of Ubbay ibn Ka°ab ؓ. He replied: '...have you ever walked on a path full of thorns?'

°Abdullah ibn °Umar ؓ replied: 'yes I have'. Ubbay ibn Ka°ab ؓ asked 'what would you do when you are walking on such a path?'

°Abdullah ibn °Umar ؓ answered: 'I would walk carefully to avoid the thorns.'

Ubbay ibn Ka°ab ؓ said: 'That is taqwa.'

So when you see something is causing you suffering and pain you learn to avoid it and leave it.

If you see that by living your life in a certain way you are descending deeper and deeper into heedlessness and loss you have to find a way out from that or will be forever lost.

Just the realisation that this is what is happening is a step – a step toward returning to one's true self.

The problem is that there are so many thorns and many of them are invisible and hard to see and it is even harder to know where exactly the thorns are along the path there until you step on them.

Why?

In a qasidah by Nasir-i-Khusraw we find the following words:

That sage set his hand upon his heart  
(a hundred blessings be on that hand and breast!)  
and said, "I offer you the remedy  
of proof and demonstration; but if you  
accept, I shall place a seal upon your lips  
which must never be broken." I gave my consent and he  
affixed the seal. Drop by drop and day by day  
he fed me the healing potion, till  
my ailment disappeared, my tongue became  
imbued with eloquent speech; my face, which had  
been pale as saffron now grew rosy with joy;  
I who had been as stone was now a ruby;  
I had been dust – now I was amber.  
He put my hand into the Prophet's hand,  
I spoke the Oath beneath the exalted Tree  
so heavy with fruit, so sweet with cooling shade.



And here we are talking about the Ṣhaykh or the Pīr or the Muṣhīd and, more importantly, about the necessity to find one and, having found one, to listen to what he has to say and then living one's life based on what they say and what they do.

In a way I am getting ahead of myself here as the next lecture on this subject is "Who?" but the who is really an answer to "Why?"

In one description we find, and the same could be said of any ṣhaykh who is really a ṣhaykh:

He is the °Imām for People of Sincerity, the Secret of Sainthood, He is the Unveiler of Secrets, the Keeper of Light, He is the Rain from the Ocean of Knowledge of this Order, which is reviving spirits in all parts of this world. He is the orchid planted in the earth of Divine Love. He is the Sun for all the universes. He is a Bird with the the Two Wings of external knowledge and internal knowledge.

He is a Miracle of the Miracles of Allāh ﷻ, walking on the earth and soaring in the Heavens. He is a Secret of the Secrets of Allāh ﷻ, appearing in His Divinity and Existing in His Existence. He is a Fountain always flowing and an Ocean without shore.



Why?

Now while this was written about a particular ṣhaykh who, in accord with my own scruples, shall remain nameless, the same could be written by any murīd of their own ṣhaykh.

Every person seeks to find a perfected human being with whom he or she may become harmonized in action, speech and thought. That is, all human beings, whether they know it or not, have their sights set on human perfection, desiring to find a teacher - who may guide them towards returning to the self Allāh ﷻ originally created.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

laqadā khalaqāna-l-°insāna fī °aḥsani taqāwīm

*We created the human in the best of forms*

In seeking the way to perfection, a person must encounter a master and accept the master heart and soul, as a guide, and devote themselves wholeheartedly to the teacher in order to win his attention.

Devotion to one's teacher, ṣhaykh, pir, murshid, is like the crying of a baby for its mother's milk. When the baby cries out of hunger, the milk of the mother is instinctively produced in the breast, which the mother places in the baby's mouth to suckle. The situation of the disciple with respect to a master is similar, where in expressing devotion, the disciple naturally attracts the master's attention, so that the master may feed the seeker the milk of spiritual cognitions and realities and quench his thirst in the quest for Reality.

As Rumi says:

The cloud must weep for the meadow to smile;

The child must cry for the milk to flow.

Our ṣhaykh, Dr, Ibrahim al-Batawi رحمه الله, held that the greatest asset of the murīd was sincerity (°ikhhlās/الإخلاص). and in this respect often spoke of those seekers who, in reality, are the murīds of their own imaginations and not really the murīd of the ṣhaykh in truth.

Many people who are drawn to the path and become students of a master have, in fact, a existant image of the master in their minds and expect the ṣhaykh to act according to *their* idea of a "ṣhaykh".

Such people are like those people Ibn Arabi noted in a line of people praying in the masjid, the majority of whom were praying to the Allāh of their own creation rather than the Allāh ﷻ who IS.

## Why?

What happens is that, after a while, they come to the conclusion that the *ṣaykh* is not acting according to their 'idea' of a *ṣaykh* and then leave him, because, from their point of view, the *ṣaykh* has not performed according to their expectations. In point of fact they expect the master to be the *murīd* or student of their own imagination, and conclude that the *ṣaykh* cannot be a real master or true teacher.

In any case the point we are trying to clarify here is the necessity for the *ṣaykh* (by what ever name you may refer to such a person). This the point one and two dimensional Muslims never really go beyond to enter into three and four dimensional *ʿIslām*.

The real sticking point is that in order to begin the return to *ʿaḥsani taqāwīm* it is absolutely necessary to find someone who, at the very least, knows more that you do and even that is fraught with danger.

In reality (*ḥaqqiqah*/حَقِيقَةً) it is essential to find a person who has been recognized by their own master as capable of guiding others and, in the same way that a doctor has a license to practice medicine and a driver a license to drive, one who has received license (*ijazāt*/أجـازات) from their teacher (who of course has re-ceived the same from their teacher all the way back to the Prophet ﷺ) to teach and guide others back to the truth of their original being.

In short, a master must have had a clear vision of the Path, traversed it from end to end, and come to know it thoroughly. The chain of initiation which exists in genuine sufi orders reaches back to the Prophet ﷺ himself and from him to Allāh ﷻ. Thus, a master who is not connected to an authentic chain of initiation is not eligible to guide others. Since such an individual has not traversed the Path and learned its principles under a true teacher, he cannot help or guide others. Moreover, the danger exists that such an individual will unknowingly communicate their own faults or defects to others. In other words, a master who has not been authorized as a master by a previous master connected to an authentic chain of initiation will not only be unable to lead a disciple to a state of perfection but may very well turn the disciple into one who is empty-handed and sick.

The grand task of revelation and religion of Allāh ﷻ is that a human being should clean from his inner self all artificial and extraneous forms of misguidance which cover the heart with rust, so that his real nature or *ʿaḥsani taqāwīm* may shine forth in full resplendence.

## Why?

It is for this reason that Allāh ﷻ in the Qur'ān has used the word *dhikr* (ذِكْر) or remembrance to refer to Divine guidance, whereas deviation from the right path is called heedlessness (*ghaflah*/غفلة). *Dhikr* has several meanings: preservation or guarding, remembrance, honor, greatness, eminence, and *ghaflah* means forgetfulness or heedlessness, because one is apt to forget his true nature with the result that one leaves the straight path. It is for this reason that *ghaflah* is also called *ḍalāl* (ضلال/deviation from the right way) and counter to *ḍalāl* is guidance (*hudā*/هُدَى) so called because it causes a human to remember their true nature which has been forgotten which is why it is called remembrance (*dhikr*/ذِكْر). Other meanings of *dhikr* such as honor and eminence, contain a subtle hint that if people remember the forgotten purpose of their nature and act righteously they will be rewarded with greatness and dignity.

It is this very forgetfulness that gives birth to heedlessness which Allāh ﷻ in the Qur'ān regards as the utmost limit of deviation:

لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا  
وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا  
أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

lahum qulūbun lā yafqahūna bihā  
wa lahum 'a'yunun lā yubāsirūna bihā  
wa lahum āadhānun lā yasma'ūna bihā  
°ulāā°ikā kā lāā°nān°ami bal hum aḍall; °ula°ika humu-l-ghāfilūn

They have hearts with which they do not understand,  
they have eyes with which they do not see,  
they have ears with which they do not hear.  
They are like cattle; rather they are more astray.  
It is they who are the heedless.

(Sūratu-l-°Arāf 7:179)

Referring to heedlessness and forgetfulness, Allāh ﷻ warns us:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

wa lā takūnū kā-lladhīna nasu-llaha fa°ansāhum anfusahum  
And be not like those who forget Allāh,  
so He makes them forget their own souls

(Sūratu-l-Hashr 59:19)

Why?

Here, by forgetting their own souls is meant the forgetting of the inborn purity of their nature, the *ʿaḥsani taqāwīm* we have been speaking and writing of and the purpose of its creation. So, according to the laws of Allāh ﷻ, when they forgot Allāh ﷻ, they forgot their own souls or their own selves in truth; that is, they deviated from the religion of truth or what Allāh ﷻ calls the *dīnu-l-ḥaqq* (دين الحق) in the Qurʾān.

And that is why people need ṭaṣawwuf.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ  
لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ

huwa alladhī ʿarsala rasūlahu bi-l-huda wa dīni-l-haqqi  
li yuḍḥhirahu ʿala-d-dīni kullī

it is He who sent His Messenger with guidance  
and the religion of truth to make it visible over all other ways.

(Suratu-s-Ṣaff 61:9)

Why? Because there must be some way back to where one began, for if there is no way back truly there is no way forward and the whole life is for nothing and all is lost.

And just praying and fasting and having some belief in the existence of Allāh and the Prophets and the Books and Angels and Jinn and life and death and heaven and hell and reading the Qurʾān from time to time may keep the beast at bay but it does not restore the soul truly but only sentimentally.

And if you don't think that is true or it somehow offends you then take a good look at the Muslim world today and then tell me that what you see is what was intended by Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ.

A simulacrum of reality at best and utter dissolution at worst.



With understanding now firmly in the forefront of consciousness let us look at the steps whereby one may return to that *ʿaḥsani taqāwīm*. Let us say that one is actually three dimensional and has made the step of giving a solemn pledge of allegiance (*bayʿah*) and made a pact (*ʿahd*) with a duly trained master and thus become four dimensional, and call those steps dimensions one, two, three, and four.

What is next?

Why?

The fifth, sixth and seventh dimensions which are, respectively.

5. Fanā° (فناء) or annihilation

6. Baqā° (بقاء) or subsistence

7. °Iqān (إيقان) or certainty

Briefly fanā° means to forget everything except Allāh ﷻ, Who says,

مَا عِنْدَكَ يَفْنَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ

mā °indakum yanfadu wa mā °inda-llahi bāqī

What is with you must vanish: what is with Allāh will endure.

(Sūratu-n-Nahl 16:96)

and:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ - وَبَقِيَ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

kullu mañ °alayhā fān:

wa yabqa wajhu rabbika dhū-l-jalali wa-l-°ikrām

All that is on it will perish:

But the Face of Thy Lord – full of Majesty and Honor will endure.

(Sūratu-r-Raḥmān 55:26-27)

In *Revelation of the Veiled* (Kashfu-l-Maḥjub/كشفُ المحجوب) an early Persian treatise on ṭasawwuf by °Alī al-Hujwirī ﷺ we find, “You must know that annihilation (*fanā°*/فناء) and subsistence (*baqā°*/بقاء) carry different expressions both in reference to the dictionary and the culture. The formalists are more puzzled by these words than by almost any other technical terms used by Ṣūfīs. Etymologically subsistence (*baqā°*/بقاء) has three meanings:

The first kind of *baqā°* is that which begins and ends in annihilation, e.g. this world, which had a beginning and will have an end, and is now subsistent;

The second kind of *baqā°* is that which came into being and will never be annihilated, viz. the Garden and the Fire as well as the next world and its inhabitants;

The third kind of *baqā°* is that which always was and always will be, viz. the subsistence of Allāh ﷻ and His eternal attributes.

Accordingly, knowledge of annihilation (*fanā°*/فناء) lies in knowing that this world is perishable, and knowledge of subsistence (*baqā°*/بقاء) lies in knowledge that the next world is everlasting.

Why?

Allāh ﷻ says:

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

wa al-°āākhiratu khayrun wa °abāqā  
But the Hereafter is better and more enduring.  
(Sūratu-l-°A°la 87:17)

Here °abāqā (أَبْقَىٰ) has been used in exaggeration, for the life of the next world is subsistence which has no annihilation.

But in reference to a state of being (ḥāl/حال) the meaning of annihilation (fanā°) and subsistence (baqā°) are:

Ignorance perishes and knowledge subsists:

Disobedience perishes and obedience subsists:

When a person is obedient and acquires knowledge, due to subsistence of their remembrance of Allāh ﷻ (dhikr/ذکر) their forgetfulness is annihilated, i.e. when anyone gains knowledge of Allāh ﷻ and subsists in knowledge of Him, then ignorance is annihilated from that person, and when he is annihilated from forgetfulness he becomes subsistent in remembrance of Allāh ﷻ, and this is to efface an evil quality through a good attribute.

But the elect (khaṣṣ) among the Sufis attach different meanings to the terms in question, as they do not relate these expressions to knowledge or to state (ḥāl), but apply them solely to the degree of perfection attained by the °awliyā° and they are those people who have become free from the pains of mortification and have escaped from the prison of stations (maqāmāt) and risen high above the change of states. Their struggles have succeeded in attainment of their object, so that they have seen all things visible, and have assimilated all they heard. They have fully grasped the knowledge of their hearts and are aware of the secrets within. After attaining this degree, recognizing the worthlessness of their achievements, they got annihilated in the object of desire, and in the very essence of desire have lost all desires of their own.

Miracles (karāmāt/كرامات) become a veil for them and stations (maqāmāt/مقامات) are damaging for them. Their states are dressed in robes of wretchedness and with the object, are objectless. They are free from all and have no affection left for intimated things

In short they have become nothing. Of them Allāh ﷻ says:

Why?

لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَىٰ مَنْ حَيَّ عَن بَيِّنَةٍ

liyahlika mañ halaka °an bayyinatīñ  
wa yaḥya man ḥayya °an bayyinat

...so that those who died would die with clear proof,  
and those who lived would live with clear proof...

(Sūratu-l-°Añfal 8:42)

And I have personally contributed to this fact:

فَنَيْتُ فَنَاءِي بِفَقْدِ هَوَائِي فَصَارَ هَوَائِي فِي الْأُمُورِ هَوَاكُ

“I annihilated my annihilation by annihilating my desires;

Now on all matters of my desire are sacrificed on your will.”

When one is annihilated from his attributes, he becomes subsistent, i.e. when one in the presence of attributes, gets annihilated from the evils of his attributes, then he in the annihilation of desires subsists with the subsistence of desire, then he is neither near nor far, neither stranger nor intimate and similarly he is neither sober nor intoxicated, neither separated nor united, neither he is affected by destruction nor by non-existence. He has been left with no name, sign, mark or record. As an elder venerable one has said:

وطاح مقامِي والرسوم كلاهما فلصت اري في الوقت ولا بعداً  
ت به عني فبان لي الهدي فهذا ظهور الحق عند الففنيين قصداً

“My station (*maqām*) and form are both vanished,  
and now there is no nearness or farness for me;

When I was annihilated from my self,  
it opened the way for my guidance.

Manifestation of the Truth  
depends on the intention of annihilation.”

In short, real annihilation from anything involves consciousness of its imperfection and absence of desire for it. One who thinks that annihilation of something can be corrected by being veiled from it, is wrong. It is not like when a man who loves a thing should say, that he abides or subsists therein or when he dislikes it, he says that he is annihilated from it, for these qualities are the characteristic of one who is still seeking.

There is neither love nor is there hate in annihilation, and neither is there consciousness of union or is there separation in subsistence.

## Why?

Some wrongly imagined that annihilation signifies loss of essence and destruction of personality, and that subsistence indicates the subsistence of the Truth in a human being (*‘anna-l-ḥaqq*); both these notions are absurd.

It is my hope that the above clarifies to some degree what is meant by the fifth and sixth dimensions of being and that leaves but one more visible dimension which is that of *‘iqān* (إيقان) or certainty.

The classical Ṣūfī doctrine of certainty involves three degrees: the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), and the reality of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).

‘Alī al-Hujwīrī ؒ discussed them in the following manner:

“By *‘ilm al-yaqīn* the Ṣūfis mean knowledge of religious practice (*mu‘amalat*) in this world according to the Divine commandments; by *‘ayn al-yaqīn* they mean knowledge of the state of dying and the time of departure from this world; and by *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* they mean the unveiling (*kashf*) of the vision of Allāh ﷻ that will be revealed in Paradise, and of its nature. Therefore, *‘ilm al-yaqīn* is the rank of religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) on account of their correct observance of the divine commands, and *‘ayn al-yaqīn* is the station of gnostics (*maqamu-l-‘arifīn*) on account of their readiness for death, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn* is the annihilation-point of lovers, on account of their rejection of the reality of ‘existent beings and things’ (*mawjudāt*)”

According to a later Ṣūfī, Najmuddīn Rāzī “certainty” arises when one strives to become aware of the spiritual world, while, at the same time, living in accord with the Divine Law (*shari‘ah*/شريعة).

In contrast to the mere philosopher and the heretic...“the possessor of true felicity nourishes the seed of the spirit in accordance with the law of *shari‘ah* until all his senses attain perfection. He then perceives, through his outer and inner senses, all the three hundred and sixty thousand realms that constitute the material and spiritual worlds (*mulk wa malakūt*)”...He sees every atom in each of these worlds to be a manifestation of one of the divine attributes (*siḥāt*) containing within it one of the signs of Allāh ﷻ; he removes the veil from the face of the manifestations, and the beauty of the signs of Allāh ﷻ is displayed to him. As Abu-l-‘Atāhiyah wrote:

In every thing is a sign (‘ayāt) of His  
pointing to the fact that He is One (aḥad).



## Why?

The world is a book to be studied and learned by the person of knowledge, just as the word of Allāh ﷻ is a book to be studied and learned by the religious scholar. The prophet ʿIbārāhīm ؑ read the signs of Allāh ﷻ in the stars, the moon, and the sun, and understood Allāh ﷻ to be the creator of the universe (6:75-79). Likewise, the prophet Sulaymān ؑ was inspired by Allāh ﷻ to learn the “language of the birds” (27:16).

As V. Cornell writes, “Before attaining this type of knowledge, the breast of the believer must first be ‘opened to Islam’ (39:22). Once the breast is opened, the heart assimilates the teaching of Allāh ﷻ as a divine ‘light’ or illumination (39:22).”

The threshold of the world of certainty (ʿiqān) is that the pure essence of Allāh ﷻ may be known in its unity, and the attributes (sifāt) of divinity may be contemplated with the eye of certainty (ʿayn al-yaqīn). This is also sometimes termed ʿilm laduni or that knowledge which comes directly from the Presence of Allāh ﷻ which was famously present in al-Khīdr of whom Allāh ﷻ says,

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِمَّا لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا

fawajadā ʿabdan min ʿibadinā ātaynāhu rahmatam-min ʿīndina  
wa ʿallamnāhu min ladunnā ʿilmā

They found a slave of Ours whom We had granted mercy from Us  
and whom We had also given knowledge direct from Us.

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:65)

What is this special hidden knowledge (ʿilm laduni) referred to in the above Qurʾānic ʾāyāt? This is the knowledge of the Spiritual Realm (ʿālam-e-mithāl/عالم المثال) which is given to Ṣūfīa-e-Karām and ʾAwliyāʾ Allah as a special favor from Allāh ﷻ.

Our Physical world or the world of Manifestation is known as ʿālam-e-Shahadah (عالم الشهادة) which is divided into continents, countries and regions.

We have about 196 large and small countries in the world which are governed by Kings, Presidents, Dictators, Despots, Prime Ministers, State Governors, etc.

Similarly the ʿālam-e-mithāl or the world of similitude or the domain of souls and spirits also has a system of governance. Since that world is not seen by physical eyes, people know very little about it.

## Why?

There are two types of <sup>ʿ</sup>Awliyā<sup>ʾ</sup> Allāh (أولياء الله) in the world. There are those who are connected with the governance of the <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl, and there are those who are not involved at all with the governance of the <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl.

<sup>ʿ</sup>Awliyā<sup>ʾ</sup> Allāh who are not involved in the governance of <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl can broadly be categorized as follows.

Majdhūb or those who are absorbed in <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl

Muḥīb or those who are lovers of Allāh ﷺ.

Maḥbūb or those who are beloved by Allāh ﷻ

Fard or Supreme solitary individuals who are among the highest ranking <sup>ʿ</sup>Awliyā<sup>ʾ</sup> Allāh some are whom are known as <sup>ʿ</sup>habīb<sup>ʾ</sup>.

Of the <sup>ʿ</sup>Awliyā<sup>ʾ</sup> Allāh who are connected with the governance of the <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl we can note the following.

Governor (qutb/قطب) There is a qutb for every city and country as and every order per his rank and seniority. The Qutb is a Sufi spiritual leader who has a Divine connection with Allāh ﷻ and passes knowledge on which makes him central to or the axis of his own realm or order, but is generally unknown to the world.

Substitute (abdāl/أبدال) – The <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl is divided into 40 regions and an abdāl or substitute is in charge of that region. The abdāl function as the keepers of their equilibrium in the world and preserve it between the times when prophets are present. Varying in classification and denomination, the identity of the abdāl are entirely unknown to the public and, sometimes, even to themselves.

Pillars (ʾawṭād/أوتاد) – are the four <sup>ʿ</sup>awṭād [pillars or supports] who are stationed at the four directions of the world, the North, South, East and West. They are in charge of looking after these four directions. Their number is confirmed in every age.

Supreme Deputy – The <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl is primarily divided into two spheres and each sphere is looked after by an emissary each of whom are called the <sup>ʿ</sup>Imām and whose names are Abdul Malik and Abdur-Rabb

The Head of the administration of the <sup>ʿ</sup>ālam-e-mithāl is (الغوث) is al-Ghawṭh whose name is derived from the vernacular *bedu* word *ghaith* which is a rain that causes all things to grow. The literal meaning of *ghawṭh* in *lisān al-ʿarabi*, is ‘the crier, the suppliant, or the one ‘who calls or cries for rain to fall for the people.’”

Why?

In ṣūfī terminology al-Ghawṭh is used to mean the *Mustajab ad-Daʿawāt* who cries and supplicates for the people before Allāh ﷻ.

°Abū-l-Qasim at-Tabaranī said in his *al-Muʿjam al-Awsāt* that Anas ibn Mālīk ؓ said that the Prophet ﷺ said: ‘The Earth will never lack forty men similar to the Friend of the Merciful (°Ibrāhīm ؑ) and through them people receive rain and are given help. None of them dies except Allāh ﷻ substitutes (*abdal*) another in his place.’



And over, above and beyond all of them at the beginning and the end of knowing stands Adam ؑ and the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

Of Adam ؑ Allāh ﷻ says,

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا

wa °allama ādama-l-°asmā° kullahā  
and We taught Ādam all the names  
(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:31)

and of the Prophet ﷺ Allāh ﷻ says,

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ

°iqāra° bi-ismi rabbik

Read in the Name of Your Lord  
(Sūratu-l-Qalam 96:1)

and

وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ  
وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا

wa °ānzala-llāhu °alayka-l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmata wa °allamaka mā  
lam takun ta°lam: wa kāna faḍlu-llāhi °alayka °aḍḥīm

Allāh has sent down the Book and Wisdom to you  
and taught you what you did not know before.

The favor of Allāh upon you is indeed immense.

(Sūratu-n-Nisā°i 4:113)



What we have tried to provide above in a very brief and short way is an amalgam of some of the characters and characteristics that form the seventh dimension which is that of certainty or *al-yaqīn*. I apologise for the density arising from trying to say too much in too little time and space about a subject that is too vast.

## Why?

Finally we arrive at the eighth dimension which is called *being the son of your moment* and is the first dimension of subtle time.

What is “Time”? al-Hallaj said, “A man’s ‘time’ is an oyster shell in the ocean of his heart. Tomorrow these shells shall be tossed and shattered on the plain of Resurrection.” There is a Ḥadīth Qudsī in which Allāh ﷻ says on the tongue of the Prophet ﷺ: “Do not curse ‘Time’ for I am Time.” Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī explains this as, “Know that time cannot be contained in place. In origin it consequently belongs to beings, and the Master of Time, is One Being among all beings. According to the capacity of the containers, Allāh ﷻ manifests Himself in the determined forms of possible beings, appearing in a variety of ways, according to the potential of each capacity.” For Ibn ‘Arabī relative time, together with motion and space, is illusory and dependent on the question “when?” whereas the real time represented by ‘spiritual entities’ is co-existent with Allāh ﷻ. Subtle dimensions of time have been described by Mullā Ṣāḍra ؒ and Ṣāḍruddīn Qunaw ؒ who identify the aeon (*dahr*/دهر) as the “root of time”, it being the eternal time within which the totality of relative time (*zamān*/زمان) exists. *Waqt* (the concrete ‘now’ as opposed to the *zamān* (the continual relative flow of time from past to future). The *waqt* (وقت) is the state you are in – either with Allāh ﷻ or with the world, joyful or sad. As Sahl al-Ṭustarī ؒ said; “Ṣūfism is nothing but the silence of the *waqt*.” It is the changing state of the *waqt* in the heart that brings the Ṣūfī to the station of ‘son of time’ (°*ibn al-waqt*/ابن الوقت) and to the state which is free of change – the ‘father of time’ (°*ab al-waqt* / اب الوقت) Ibn ‘Arabī ؒ saw *waqt* flowing from the past or the remembered now to the future which is the projected now and ended by quoting Mawlānā Rumī ؒ: “The past and future hides Allāh ﷻ from all eyes. Burn them and your problems are solved”.

Abu ‘Ali al-Daqqāq ؒ said, “*Waqt* (according to the Community of Ṣūfīs) is that which you are in. If you are involved in the world, then your time is the time of the world. If you are involved in the hereafter, then your time is the hereafter. If you are in joy, then your time is happiness. If you are in sorrow, then your time is sorrow.” What he means is that *waqt* is that which has overcome the person at that time. Importantly it could at times mean that *waqt* is what is between the two tenses — the past and the future.

Why?

This is the terminology of the majority of the Community. This is why they say, the Ṣūfī and faqir is the son of his time (*ibn al-waqt*).

What they mean is that his ambition is such that he does not go beyond that which is the immediate thing for him to do and most beneficial for him. He does that which is sought from him at the exact time and what continues. He has no care for the past and what is coming, but cares for the time he is in, for indeed preoccupying one's self with the past or the future wastes the present time; whenever a time comes, the loser is preoccupied with the [other] two, and so his time passes and is irrevocably lost.

°Imām aṣḥ-Ṣhāfi'ī ؓ said, "I remained in the company of the Ṣūfīs and did not benefit from them in anything except two sentences. I heard them say, 'Time is a sword, if you don't destroy, it will destroy you.' And, 'If you don't preoccupy yourself with the truth then your self will preoccupy you in falsehood.'"

Let not good times deceive you,  
For beneath them lie hidden difficulties.

How many seasons of spring were there — the trees of which became bright, the flowers of which blossomed and the fruits of which matured — on which heavenly calamity befell and it became as Allāh ﷻ says,

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَزْنَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ  
النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازْبَهَّتْ وَطَنَّتْ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ  
قَادِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا أَتَاهَا أَمْرٌ نَّالٍ أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبِ بِالْأَمْسِ  
كَذَلِكَ نَفْضِلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

°innamā maṭḥalu-l-ḥayāti-d-dunyā  
kamā°in °aʿẓalnāhu mina-s-sama°i fakḥṭalaṭa bihi nabātu-l-°arḍi  
mimmā yāā°kulu-n-nasu wa-l-an°āmu  
ḥatta °idḥāā °akḥadḥati-l-°arḍu zukḥrufaḥā  
wa °izzayyanat wa ḍḥanna °ahluhā °annahum qādirūna °alayhā  
°atāha °amrunā laylan °aw nahāran  
faja°alnāhā ḥaṣīdan kān lam tagḥna bi-l-°amsi  
kadḥalika nufaṣṣilu-l-°āyāti li-qawmin yatafakkarūn

Why?

The metaphor of the life of this world is that of water  
which We send down from the sky,  
and which then mingles with the plants of the earth  
to provide food for both people and animals.

Then, when the earth is at its loveliest and takes on its fairest guise  
and its people think they have it under their control,

Our command comes upon it by night or day  
and We reduce it to dried-out stubble,

as though it had not been flourishing just the day before!

In this way We make Our Signs clear for people who reflect.

(Sūrah Yunus 10:24)

The *ʾaḥṣhab al-waqt* do not preoccupy themselves with what has come before or that which will come later. Rather, they preoccupy themselves by taking due care of the current time and that which is incumbent on them at that time. They say that the *ʿarif* is the son of his time (*ʾibn al-waqt*); there is no past for him and no future and that is the key to the eighth dimension; the octave and renewal.

If you want it to be raining when it is sunny or hot when it is cold or day when it is night or good when it is bad or calm when it is stormy – forget about it. You have missed the boat.

*Fihī mā fihī* (فيه مافيه) or “It Is What It Is”, or “In it what is in it” is the name of the game if you are the son of your own moment in time.

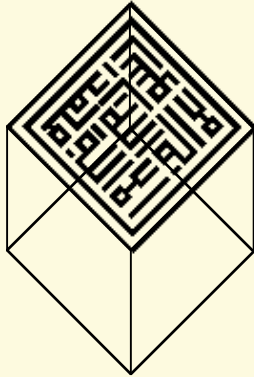
Allāh ﷻ says, 'I have bought you, your moments, your breaths, you possessions, your lives. If they are expended on Me, if you give them to Me, the price of them is everlasting Paradise. This is your worth in My sight.'

I am a bird. I am a nightingale. I am a parrot. If they say to me, 'Make some other kind of sound,' I cannot. Since my tongue is such as it is, I cannot speak otherwise; unlike one who has learned the song of the birds who is not a bird himself but the enemy of the birds. He sings and whistles so that they may take him for a bird. Order him to produce a different kind of note and he is able to do so since that note is merely assumed by him, and is not truly his own. Neither his song nor is his time is his but another's in truth.

In closing I tell you I am a beautiful garden set about by a wall, and on that wall are all kinds of filth and thorns. The passer-by does not see the garden; he sees that wall and its uncleanness, and speaks evil of it. Why then should the garden be angry with him?

*wa-llāhu ʿalim*

notes:



noon hierographers  
green mountain  
virginia  
usa